



## 2011 Waterloo Region Food Summit

One of our 6 food system priorities:

### **FARM VIABILITY**

- ◆ A major part of a healthy local food system is “viable” farms – i.e. farms that are profitable businesses that give a comfortable, secure income to farm families in return for their investment in land, infrastructure, equipment, farm inputs, time, labour and other necessary costs.
- ◆ Many farms in our Region and in Canada are not viable: evidence for this is that farms are in continual decline. Very few new farmers are entering the business of farming because young people do not view agriculture as viable.
- ◆ Farming is a unique business because it is risky and full of uncertainty due to weather conditions, pests, fluctuating commodity prices, changing retail markets, shifting fuel costs, land value, labour needs and global trade patterns, to name a few. Farming is hard work and a way of life.

#### **What do farmers need to improve farm viability?**

##### 1. Fair prices

ability to retail at the farm gate that eliminates the need for middle men between producer and consumer

Ability to retail food at farm gate – opportunity to do 3 things

Ability to add/retain/value add, entertain the ability to further process, value add and value-retain

Ability to advertise and direct Directional signage on public roads – Foodlink map

##### 2. Education and training and experience, mentorship

Entrepreneurial training – ability to “niche” - allow people to derive more income from products than conventional farming.

mentorship – to learn how to run a business

entrepreneurial training – how to run a business

education tailored to agriculture

##### 3. The ability to hire labour – growing and processing – compete in costs with USA and international the ability to attract and pay for labour

##### 4. Municipal and provincial support – whole farm support (crop insurance), subsidies to make level playing field; appropriate regulation – building codes, food safety, species at risk; appropriate

**Get Connected:** [www.wrfoodsystem.ca](http://www.wrfoodsystem.ca)

enforcement (CFIA inspection of kitchen – fixing the problem rather than putting the person out of business) – 2 ways that this works – penalty or incentive

appropriate regulation and enforcement of all regulations pertaining to food production, sales and processing

the ability to use signage to draw people to your facility

appropriate land use planning policy that prevents land speculation and paving over and mining – zoned agriculture, countryside line You can invest in your land because in the foreseeable future it will remain farm land

-functional support or stabilization program – e.g. provincial crop insurance – mechanism to help you when you have a bad year. Farmers pay premiums but administered by government.

5. Appropriate land use planning – e.g. neighbourhood markets

6. Federal support – including labelling re product of Canada

Trade rules, border controls and inspection – mechanism for stopping redundant trade

[Anti-dumping mechanism]

competition from other countries – no level playing field

fair trade and border control policy – federal

appropriate and fair food labelling policy – that states where food comes from

7. Tax policy – income tax act: part-time farmers treated differently from full-time farmers – detriment to younger farmers -

supportive tax policy that recognizes the unique nature of farming e.g. weather can determine your income that allows the management of risk

Commodity price is determined by the market

Price of local food can be increased by value added or direct marketing

Ability to niche-market – get better price because it's unique

Avoid buying all food from retail that sources from other countries – have choice – maintain diversity

supportive consumers

What can you do to improve farmer viability?

Become aware of farming realities and advocate for their issues

Buy local

Pay a fair price for food

Buy seasonal food